

At Home in San Clemente

Ex-President Gives Little Hint of Plans

By Bradley Graham

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SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Aug. 10—Out of the public arena and home at last, former President Nixon secluded himself today in his Spanish-style villa, La Casa Pacifica, offering little hint of how he plans to restructure his life.

Florists' trucks carrying "Welcome Home" bouquets from area residents passed in and out of the fenced and guarded compound this weekend. And several aides, saying they will stay with the former President as long as they are needed, shuttled back and forth.

But activity was kept to a minimum, and the Nixon family was said to be reovering from the ordeal of the Watergate scandal that forced him to resign as 37th President of the United States on Friday.

The aides say they are unsure of what the former chief executive is thinking and what his next moves will be. "I don't even know what questions to ask him," one top aide said.

The customary trappings of presidential power already have begun to disappear. In sharp contrast to previous trips, for instance, the press corps is operating without an established headquarters, briefing room, or special communications facilities.

Accustomed to staying at one or two places here, reporters now are on their own to find rooms in tourist-frequented oceanside villages.

Friday, for the first time since Mr. Nixon bought the San Clemente retreat, the press was barred from covering his arrival within the fences.

Now, when one calls the formerly efficient western White House switchboard, it either constantly rings busy or goes unanswered. "We are very private people today," Diane Sawyer, an aide to spokesman Ronald L. Ziegler, told a reporter who managed to reach the Nixon home through the White House switchboard in Washington.

The residents of this relaxed affluent community nestled along the California shoreline gave Mr. Nixon an enthusiastic welcome Friday, and should the former President decide to reside here the people of San Clemente feel no reserve toward accepting him in his new status as permanent citizen.

Orange County, which includes San Clemente, voted heavily for Mr. Nixon in 1968 and 1972. Los Angeles executives and retired naval officers number high among its citizenry, forming the base of Republican strength here.

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CLEMENTE, From A1

"Orange County has been a frontier," explained San Clemente Mayor Thomas O'Keefe. "It is made up largely of people who have set out to make their own fortunes, people who believe in freedom of opportunity and independence," said the mayor, implying that it is a place where Richard Nixon could easily fit in.

"This town would accept him. There would be no problem," said the local Democratic club president Gregory Joannidi.

Although Mr. Nixon used to spend five or six weeks a year at San Clemente, one town official estimated that fewer than 200 residents have ever seen him.

In the years of his residence as President, he reportedly only went downtown twice—once to buy a beachball and once to buy candy. As much as they expect the former President to become a friendly neighbor, the people of San Clemente still regard him as a recluse.

But a talk to the crowd which greeted him at the nearby El Toro Marine Air Station on Friday, Mr. Nixon indicated he does not intend to become a recluse at San Clemente. "Having completed one task doesn't mean we're going to sit in the marvelous California sun and do nothing," he said, adding, "I am going to continue to work for peace among all nations."

Owners of area drugstores and motels expect to continue their current practice of providing maps outlining the route to the gate of the Nixon compound, though palm trees hide the home from view at the entrance.

Mr. Nixon's resignation has posed a difficult question for town officials, who are now uncertain how much of the annual \$229,292 federal grant to strengthen the local police force for Mr. Nixon's protection will be forthcoming after this year.

Since Mr. Nixon purchased San Clemente 5½ years ago, the town has used most of funds to add eight policemen to its force. Local and federal officials report-

edly met this weekend to discuss protection procedures for the future and federal grants to sustain them.

San Clemente's acting police chief, Mel Porter, said he anticipates no change in the near future in the level of Mr. Nixon's protection. If anything, he said it expects it to become an increasingly local burden.

Residents have lost the

hope they once had that San Clemente would become the site of a presidential library. Rumors of such a library, expected to lure millions of visitors a year, started two years ago, and California communities with any tie to the Nixon name began haggling over site selection.

As a grand gesture in their own bid for the project, San Clemente's leaders persuaded citizens to contribute funds for a bronze bust of Richard Nixon, which today sits in city hall.

Members of the town's Republican club shared with the nation shock and disappointment over Mr. Nixon's confession last week that he had authorized cover-up of the Watergate break-in six days after it had occurred.

"The people of San Clemente felt very let down," said one Republican, a former mayor, Cliff Myers.

But other townspeople commented that Mr. Nixon's presence should in no way taint the community. Emil Radics, executive manager of the local Chamber of Commerce, said area businessmen "a long time ago" decided to move away from promoting the city as "the home of the western White

House," recognizing that such promotion was good only during the tenure of Mr. Nixon in office.

Some here even expect Mr. Nixon to choose his Key Biscayne, Fla., estate over La Casa Pacifica as his permanent residence in order to be close to his friends, C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo and Robert Abplanalp.

Nevertheless, so long as he chooses to stay, the people of San Clemente will embrace Mr. Nixon. Alfred Cornwall, owner of Mr. Nixon's favorite restaurant, in San Juan Capistrano, intends to keep the former President's favorite dish on the menu. It is called "the President's choice" and consists of chili, an enchilada, chicken, Spanish rice, and refried beans.

On the front page of San Clemente's Daily Sun-Post on Friday, publisher Stanford Manning wrote this greeting when Mr. Nixon arrived: "We recognize the anguish and sorrow you and your family have suffered these past months. Amid all the clamor and invective, neighbor, we offer you warm wishes and amity here in San Clemente following your seemingly endless ordeal. Rest your mind and spirit."